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SUBJECT: RWANDOPHONIE: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT MEANS -- THE VIEW FROM KINSHASA

REF: A) KINSHASA 503 B) KINSHASA 462 C) KINSHASA 431
D) KINSHASA 429 E) KINSHASA 413 F) KINSHASA
409 G) KINSHASA 390 H) KINSHASA 388

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Garvelink for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Since the early 2009 rapprochement between Kinshasa and Kigali, there has been great focus on the phenomenon of Rwandophone ascendancy in North Kivu to the detriment of other ethnic groups. Much has been reported (reflets) about the different aspects (political, economic, and security) of the apparent power grab by Rwandophone elements in the province. It is indisputable that there is a new paradigm in North Kivu, and there are those who have benefited from the changes and those who have been disadvantaged. This phenomenon warrants close observation. It is not, however, a return to the 1998-2003 period of RCD government in North Kivu. Although Rwandophones are again assuming key positions, the government in Kinshasa, in close cooperation with the Government of Rwanda, is in control of the provincial government in North Kivu and both governments understand that they need the support of all ethnic groups if there is to be peace and stability in North Kivu. The U.S. has little scope to influence the political process but we should be attentive to a number of tripwires. End summary.

Definition of Rwandophone

¶2. (C) The literal meaning of "Rwandophone" is someone who speaks Kinyarwanda, the common language of Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, as well as in parts of eastern DRC and southern Uganda. For the purpose of this analysis, "Rwandophone" is defined as anyone resident in the DRC with Rwandan ancestry. This category includes Hutus and Tutsis who settled in the Kivus several centuries ago, as well as Hutus and Tutsis who emigrated to the Kivus in the 20th century. It does not include Interahamwe (genocidaires) elements who fled Rwanda in connection with the 1994 genocide and who subsequently became the FDLR. Many Rwandophones naturally look to Kigali for inspiration and guidance, and the GoR is clearly comfortable with Rwandaphones controlling the levers of power in North Kivu. This definition of "Rwandophonie," however, does not imply direct control of North Kivu from Kigali. Rwandophonie in the Kivus is being promoted by Congolese (e.g., former RCD Governor Eugene Serufuli and the "new CNDP") with the tacit, but clear support from Kinshasa and Kigali.

What is Rwandophonie in North Kivu?

¶3. (C) The current rise of Rwandophonie is a reordering of the province's political, economic, and military power

structures. It is unarguably one of the most important, if not the most important, dynamics in North Kivu at the moment.

It is short-sighted and faulty logic, however, to view every development in the region through a "Rwandophone prism." It is not some kind of frontal or even subtle attack on the democratic rights of members of other ethnic groups in North Kivu. In fact, democratic institutions are functioning as well or better now than at any time over the last half-century. Most of the provincial and local government posts, which many Rwandophones allegedly covet, are appointed, not elected positions. The much-discussed theory that promoters of a Rwandophone agenda, led by former RCD governor Eugene Serufuli, have targeted North Kivu Governor Julien Paluku (a Nande) to resign is very plausible. But, there are undoubtedly other considerations affecting Paluku's tenure as governor: genuine dissatisfaction with his performance (ref A) and Serufuli's own personal ambitions. For Serufuli, the most important priority is to regain the governor's office. He wants personal power, not power for the greater Rwandophonie cause.

¶4. (C) Although the current decentralization process does not foresee a division of North Kivu ("decoupage" in French), the constitution does allow for additional territorial realignments, e.g., the "decoupage" of North Kivu into a Nande-dominated Grand Nord and a Rwandophone-dominated Petit Nord (or "Grand Sud" as some now characterize it). In the end, we are uncertain whether "decoupage" in the Kivus will actually take place. First, there is considerable opposition to this from non-Rwandophone groups. Second, Rwandophones may be able to realize their objectives within a unified

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North Kivu. The fact that Rwandophones would be willing to "cede control" of the Grand Nord to the Nande, instead of opting to "take over" the entire province, may indicate a willingness to compromise with the Nande or perhaps an understanding that Rwandophones are not strong enough to ram through their agenda on a province-wide basis.

Integrating the CNDP

¶5. (C) Rwandophonie is a vital tool to integrate the CNDP politically and militarily into GDRC structures. This, of course, was part of the Kabila-Kagame trade-off: Kigali would cease all support of the CNDP in return for a "Rwanda-friendly" provincial government in Goma. There were many individuals with seemingly close ties to Kigali who were shut out of the new deal, e.g., Nkunda and prominent Goma businessman Victor Ngezayo. So the idea that "Rwandophones" represent a monolithic force with a single overriding objective is simply untrue.

Today's Rwandophonie is not yesterday's RCD-Goma

¶7. (C) Many observers have drawn a parallel between the relative ascendancy of the Rwandophone agenda now and the RCD-Goma domination of the region in 1998-2003. (Note: The Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie, RCD, or Congolese Party for Democracy in English, ruled North Kivu as a proxy of the Rwandan Government from 1998-2003. End Note.) To be sure, some of the old RCD names are recycling. However, the situation for the GoR, the GDRC, and North Kivu players is fundamentally different in 2009. From the perspective in Kinshasa, Rwanda has become a much more secure, self-confident nation, without the ever-present threat of regular FDLR attacks that were so common in the years immediately following the 1994 genocide. Rwanda does not want or need to micro-manage North Kivu politics, as it did during the RCD-Goma era. In addition, the GoR appears much more sensitive about its international image, to the extent that it would not condone a blatantly undemocratic or violent suppression of non-Rwandophone groups. The RDF's exemplary attention to human rights norms during the Umoja Wetu

military operation is evidence that Rwanda has really "learned its lesson" (ref A).

Rwandophonie and improving North Kivu security

¶8. (C) A re-emergence of traditional cooperation between Congolese Hutu and Tutsi communities is a welcome development, especially for North Kivu's stability. Granted, if other ethnic groups begin to feel entirely excluded from the province's political and economic developments, the potential for violence will increase. To date, the Rwandophone drive for increased power has not included violent subjugation of other ethnic groups. The recent up-tick in FDLR atrocities is clearly unrelated to the Rwandophone political agenda.

Economic Aspects

¶9. (C) As with most political dynamics, there is an interrelated economic dynamic. It appears that both Kinshasa and Kigali recognize the benefits of closer economic relations and the need to eliminate non-state, i.e., negative forces, involvement in North Kivu's economy. While the GDRC has apparently been willing to reduce FARDC involvement in illegal mining activities in collaboration with the FDLR (e.g., the 85th Brigade at the Bisie Mine -- ref B), Rwanda, by stopping its support to the CNDP and arresting Nkunda, has eliminated the CNDP's capacity to economically exploit North Kivu (at least as an independent entity). Both governments have benefited from Rwanda's actions. Rwanda wants a stable market in North Kivu to ensure continued access to natural resources. The DRC has eliminated the FDLR as a "middleman," which had not provided any value-added. Removing the FDLR from the key mining sector has allowed the GDRC to increase its own revenue intake and enabled it to deal directly with the importer (Rwanda).

Non-Rwandophone interests

¶10. (C) Perhaps the biggest brake on any Rwandophone plan to

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grab complete control of North Kivu is the relative strength of the non-Rwandophones to resist. Various sources (ref G) have indicated that the Nande, Hunde, and other non-Rwandophone groups will not be steam rolled into political submission. Kabila typically does not want to make permanent enemies either on an individual level or with specific ethnic groups. Kabila, although supporting a redistribution of power in favor of the Rwandophones now, does not want to alienate the Nande; he may need them for another day, especially as the DRC moves towards elections in ¶2011. Moreover, on a national level, there is no solid evidence of a move to isolate Nande politicians (ref C). Most importantly, although some Nande and Hunde are frustrated, there is no indication that the new political realignment in the Kivus will provoke an armed response (refs A, F, and G). Finally, individuals often operate outside of their own ethnic context. Nande in Goma are reportedly much more comfortable working with Rwandophones than Nande from the Grand Nord. And, as mentioned above, many Congolese Hutus and Tutsi that do not support the more radical Rwandophone agenda (refs D and G).

Tripwires

¶11. (C) Despite our analysis that Rwandophonie does not for now represent an assault on democratic rights or a radical sidelining of non-Rwandophones from the North Kivu political stage, we do need to be aware of possible tripwires that could radicalize current trends:

-- Complete exclusion of non-Rwandophones from political, economic, and security domains in North Kivu. This would, but perhaps not immediately, lead to a much greater probability that the aggrieved groups would take up arms.

-- Re-emergence of a CNDP rebel movement consisting of disgruntled Nkunda loyalists. While we do not view this as probable in the short-term, a few hundred CNDP elements could at some point take up arms again, this time in alliance with non-Rwandophone elements, in a joint attack against the Rwandophone power structure.

-- A spiraling increase in human rights abuses, both by the FDLR and GDRC security forces. With the FDLR and out-of-control FARDC troops often preying on the local population, non-Rwandophone forces could band together to "protect their communities," leading perhaps to the creation of new armed rebel groups.

-- A deterioration in the rapprochement between the DRC and Rwanda. If for some reason relations took a turn for the worse, either side might opt to manipulate ethnic tensions to stir up trouble.

USG actions

¶12. (C) While the USG will have limited opportunity to directly affect current trends in North Kivu, there are certain steps we should consider. First, we need to respect the political process, as long as it unfolds in a democratic framework, even if there is a perception that certain groups are being disadvantaged politically. Second, we should urge GDRC and North Kivu political leaders to be ethnically inclusive in the new North Kivu constellation, and to avoid any tendency to forcibly carry through a radical Rwandophone agenda. Third, we should continue to remind all actors (GoR, GDRC, and North Kivu officials) that the international community will not condone a return to an RCD-Goma situation. Finally, we should encourage all actors to accelerate regional economic development and integration as a means to solidify tenuous political gains.

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